

four

# Quarters

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## ***Good Friday***

● Leo Brady

All other days have happened, scattered  
Like shot against the target Time, a mock  
To meaning, vagrant. They have not mattered  
More than the gestures of a broken clock.  
Haphazard, random, casual days to dot  
The calendar in black and be or not.  
But this day is and was and had to be  
And is in letter and in spirit red.  
This day was doomed to dawn. Eternity  
Decreed the sowing, planned the harvest: bread  
Inevitable. This day, as wood,  
Is stable. Thus we call this Friday good.

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# Ecclesiastical Art and the Layman

The Editors of **FOUR QUARTERS** believe that the past few years have seen the beginning of a movement among artists, clergy, and laymen that may well re-establish for the Church its once-proud, though unofficial, title of "patron of contemporary artists and contemporary art." We have, therefore, asked Joseph Mintzer, a founder and first president of the Ecclesiastical Art Guild of Detroit, to supply the specific instance—that of the founding of the Detroit Guild—upon which Michael Sikorski of La Salle College develops some aspects of the general problem involved in the employment of art in Catholic communities today.

## I

● Joseph W. Mintzer

**T**WO YEARS AGO, while attending the opening of an annual statewide art exhibition in Michigan, several Catholic artists met and exchanged opinions on the subject matter being shown. A young Catholic matron deplored the fact that while a wide range of subjects was represented there was not even one work of art of religious inspiration. Works of social significance, political belief, decorative motivation, representational naturalism, and pure abstraction were there—but not one work inspired directly by belief in God.

These Catholic artists realized that because of the purely secular state facilities available to exhibiting artists it was somewhat understandable that no work of religious significance had been accepted by the exhibition jury, and perhaps that none had even been submitted by any of the exhibiting artists. So they planned to meet at a later date and discuss the problems at length. My study, as centrally located, was offered and accepted as a meeting place. There we faced the problem of action.

We decided to organize an Ecclesiastical Art Guild that would be open to all artists who were willing to express or demonstrate their understanding of the teachings of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church. There was to be no exclusion of anyone who did not profess our own faith; so many gifted artists have found Christ a great artistic inspiration.

A spiritual moderator was needed to advise us on theological matters as they arose, so we invited a priest who had an extremely broad art background and a wonderful grasp of the religious and artistic problems involved.

Our invitation to fellow artists met with considerable response. Each meeting saw our group swell with artists and craftsmen from almost every level. Eminent architects, sculptors, painters, poets, musicians—members

from practically every field of endeavor required for ecclesiastical functions were included.

The charter we drew up was too technical to include here, but these were our aims:

- a) to have no argument with the great traditional arts, but rather to help spread understanding of them whenever and wherever possible, especially to seminarians, who would be the pastors of the future, and in whose hands choice of art for the churches would someday rest;
- b) to show what living American artists had to contribute to the beliefs of Catholic Americans, using any and all artistic techniques;
- c) to discourage the blind purchase of plaster statues and artistically poor paintings from art supply catalogues;
- d) to hold an annual exhibition in order to present our works to the clergy, religious, and laymen.

Despite the fact that we had no financial support (we paid dues for our slight Guild expenses) and no encouragement from diocesan authorities (we evoked only an attitude of "let's wait and see"), we managed to have an exhibition. In spite of disagreements among the artists themselves, especially between the traditionalists and the modernists, we exhibited works juried and accepted by three professional artists and approved by our moderator.

The opening of our first show was attended by almost a thousand people in spite of the winter's worst weather, and the exhibit was well attended for its duration. Many purchases were made directly from the show, and several commissions resulted. The Chancellor of the diocese was most gratified and extended monthly use of diocesan facilities. It was a humble beginning but it established conclusively that an interest exists in a religious art by native craftsmen using existing techniques.

## II

## ● Michael L. Sikorski

**B**UT with what religious art and habits of viewing religious art instilled by it, must the contemporary native artist compete—in his effort to wed the best of the traditional with the best of the modern, to restore vitality and primacy to the Church as Patron of Arts?

The Rev. David Ross King, in an article entitled "Art and Matter" written for *Commonweal*, makes the following observation: "Have not men made pictures and statues these many centuries (and faster and cheaper than ever in this mechanized age), and are not the churches and our homes filled with them? Yes. But are these always representations that are sanctified and that sanctify? Have they the 'sacramental character'?" In much religious art have we not found the "immensities of religion, of

humanity's need and humanity's destiny, set aside, and in their place," to quote Father Gerald Vann, "only thoughts that soothe and lull the individual—a lace-edged, flower-strewn covering over the mouth of hell?" I believe that Julian Green did the art of Catholics in America a service when he faced honestly "the awful spell cast over religious sensibility by the great man whom our fathers called Sanzio." Raphael did indeed "saturate and infect the minds of millions with dull commonplaces about the gospel . . . crowding the invisible with chromos." How right is Mr. Green:

Raphael is probably one of the most dangerous heretics since the Church began; his heresy is a subtle one which begins with a yawn and ends with nausea. His good intentions are as plentiful as they are demoralizing. He kills devotion with an almost infallible aim.

What exactly have been the effects of this corruptive "classic" influence upon the art of our churches and homes? Upon the people? Has not art without the truly Christian character tended to form people without Christian character? The nadir of the tragedy, I am persuaded, is in the negation of reverence. Before the images the beholder feels either comfortably patronizing or cozily chummy; he may experience something akin to calf love, but he doesn't fall irresistibly to his knees. Who could feel before the *Madonna della Sedia* his own littleness and his own dignity, the majesty of the divine, the splendor of God's holy works—as he might before a *Head of Christ* by Roualt? The art which has been spawned on false classicism has sought escape from reality, rather than the awesome penetration into reality—just as have those allegedly devotional books that drool gluttonously over a sugar-candy heaven and shudder daintily before the spectacle of God's material creation, belittling the body, for example, as the prison-house of the spirit from which on death's blessed day the soul will at length escape, like a bird from its hated cage (in all this, what of the resurrection of the Son of Man, wherein is contained mystically the ennoblement of all our visible universe?).

Yet for reverence, sacred and essential to a true Christian spirit, reverence for God and all the works of God, has been substituted sentiment and for love has been substituted sensuality. Look at our *Christs at the Helm*, our *St. Bernadettes* (heavy with lip rouge and dreamy-eyed with false lashes)—here is love as believed in, hoped for, and parodied by the world of which Satan is prince and sly master. In such works of art, common and commercial, big-selling and properly approved, I find no trace of divine love or of its elevation of all things into itself. Faith is weak in many hearts, we hear. One cause, surely, is discovered in the representations of sacred persons and themes in the art of our churches and homes. Well might a man grow weak in purpose and careless in practice who has been reared among swivel-hipped Madonnas, saccharin Sacred Hearts, spineless St. Josephs, and gaudily garbed Infants of Prague. ("Genuine crystal



eyes, very lifelike, twelve dollars extra.") The yawn begins in childhood and the nausea comes in due time.

The present feeling toward objects being manufactured for devotional purposes is characterized by dissatisfaction. The feeling is well-founded and no one expresses better than Father King just what is the cause of complaint. The dissatisfaction has become general among clergy and laity alike. It is to be found wherever there are men and women of any intelligence and sensibility who need the ministrations of true religious art. The devotional objects available today simply do not satisfy this need. The reaction has gone beyond the talking stage. Ecclesiastical Art Guilds (as Mr. Mintzer has suggested) are foremost among such movements in the United States. The most successful work undertaken to improve the condition of sacred art has been done in France. I refer to the appearance, in such religious structures as the church of Assy, the Dominican Chapel at Vence, and the church at Audincourt, of religious art executed in the modern manner by such contemporary masters as Matisse, Roualt, Braque, Miro, Léger, Chagall, and Bazaine. Because the work accomplished in France has drawn attention throughout the world and because the approach to the problem of securing good sacred art as manifested in these projects has met with considerable favor and will undoubtedly be repeated elsewhere, it is proper to consider just what that approach is.

The artistic adviser for the church of Assy and the church at Audincourt was Father M. A. Couturier, O.P. In a recent issue of the *Magazine of Art* there appeared an article by Father Couturier entitled "Religious Art and the Modern Artist." It seems to me that the problem as Father Couturier sees it is primarily an artistic one. He writes: "We were tired of always seeing in our churches the most mediocre examples of painting and sculpture." He does not fail to note the religious lack in church art: "In the long run, we thought, this mediocrity could only result in seriously altering the religious psychology of clergy and worshippers alike." Father Couturier seems to feel, however, that the religious aspect of the problem will take care of itself if the artistic aspect is improved.

It was not theoretical reasons of doctrine but, on the contrary, considerations of a primarily practical nature that impelled us to summon these artists. We called on them purely and simply because they were the best painters and sculptors of our day. We believed that it was our duty to procure for God and our Faith the best art of the present. That was our first reason. . . . In the second place we thought that by turning to these masters we might be able to bring about a renaissance of Christian art in general.

It was Father Couturier's belief that in procuring the best art of the day he would obtain works that were also genuinely religious. He was well aware, though, that of the artists he had engaged "the majority . . . were not religious men, or only very superficially so." Some people accused him of "preferring to seek unbelievers rather than believers." This he denies. He does admit that it "posed a real problem." It was this: "One could certainly look for strong vital works from men of this sort; but

could one expect truly *religious* works? Could we expect from these modern masters art which would also have authenticity as *religious* art?" Father Couturier believed that he could. He feels now that his expectations "have been fully justified."

Most of us, myself included, must base our opinions of their work only on photographs which have appeared in magazines. In my judgment Father Couturier has good reason to be aesthetically satisfied. The art which has come forth is original, imaginative, and exciting. It represents certainly some of the best art of today. As religious art, however, it is perhaps not all that one would have it be. True, the artists have not allowed the irreverent elements of previous church art to enter into their compositions. But the artists have not as a whole or even as a majority managed to substitute anything positive for what they have eliminated. Their success is a negative one. Their works are like souls which have been cleansed, but into which Sanctifying Grace has not yet entered. The reason may very well be the difficulty to which Father Couturier himself referred, namely, the fact that the majority of the artists "were not religious men, or only superficially so." I must admit, though, that in the absence of geniuses who are at the same time saints it is safer, as Father Couturier states it, "to turn to geniuses without faith than to believers without talent." (I would like to note here that the majority of the members of the Ecclesiastical Art Guilds are believers. As in the Detroit group of which Mr. Mintzer was president, far from taking their talent for granted, they encourage further self-development in the craft of their respective arts.)

In another part of his article, Father Couturier writes:

In spite of the fact that during the past century extraordinary changes have been taking place in every aspect of life—spiritual, social and material—we still see Christian art constantly repeating the old styles of past centuries, slavishly rebuilding romanesque, gothic or Renaissance churches, never utilizing modern forms until they are already outmoded—or else employing them artificially, in a senile fashion, in repetitions, copies or borrowings that lack any spontaneous spark of life.

Father Couturier favors changing from the romanesque and gothic, and his reasons are cogent enough. Yet perhaps one should remark that while Christian art *has* been repeating the old styles, repetition is not an evil in itself. The general use of romanesque and gothic styles in different countries and throughout diverse social periods has made these styles traditional. They have come to symbolize for many the oneness, universality, and continuous prevailment of the Church itself. To hold that Christian art has employed the old forms "slavishly" may seem too thoroughly demeaning. Jacques Maritain has observed: "There is no style peculiar to religious art, there is no religious technique." He notes further

that sacred art . . . cannot isolate itself, that it must, at all times, following the example of God Himself who speaks the language of men, assume, the while exalting from within, every means and every form of technical vitality, so to speak, placed at its disposal by the contemporary generation.

The language of the old forms is one that is rich in connotation. I would give it up with reluctance, doing so only when certain that men would be able to communicate in the new language as exactly and, more importantly, as meaningfully as they did in the old. Father Couturier writes: "Latin is a dead language, because it is no longer either evolving nor renewing its structure; . . . it is language incapable of assimilating any new form. In the same way one is forced to admit that Christian art is dead." Latin to be adequate for the Church's use of it need not be capable of assimilating any new forms. The language of Christian art, while it is capable of assimilating new forms, may not need to do so. Change for the sake of mode is not desirable here. The mean which I would follow is that to be found in the original charter of the Ecclesiastical Art Guild of Detroit (outlined by Mr. Mintzer in *Part I* of this essay), for while its members were advised therein to explore any and all modern artistic techniques they were cautioned to have no argument with the traditional forms.

M. Maritain writes that religious art "must be intelligible. For it is there above all for the instruction of the people, it is a theology in graphic representation." The art in a church is there for the men in the street and must be as intelligible to them as it is to those of the faithful who are more fully informed artistically. Unfortunately, not all of the art to be found in the church at Assy or Audincourt is without a trace of obscurity. Father King writes:

If they (the masterpieces of Renaissance and post-Renaissance techniques) go to the heart in the wrong way (for as Father Jungmann, the distinguished Jesuit philosopher, so aptly says, citing the Raphael Madonnas, "the purely natural relations predominate while those of an ecclesiastical-religious nature have faded") at least they do go there, and they do deeply impress the mind and affect the soul if not beyond the natural level. They do not leave beholders of good will perplexed and frightened and unhappy. *Claritas* still counts.

On the other hand, the faithful are not prevented from improving their artistic taste and understanding by studying. One of the aims of the Ecclesiastical Art Guilds is to spread understanding wherever possible.

Father Couturier, looking over the work that has been done in France, remarks that "an era so lacking in hope has required adventurous experiment. . . . As long as the ecclesiastical authorities continue to repose their confidence in us, we shall continue to follow the same path. We believe this path to be the best and most direct and, in the long run, the most certain."

Father Couturier and his associates in France, and the Ecclesiastical Art Guilds in America, have done more than merely follow a path—they have blazed it. Further exploration is still needed, but they are working in the right direction. The path they have opened may not be the *most* direct or certain way but it is the most promising that is open to Christian art today. It deserves to be well travelled.



# Because You Have Seen

• John F. McGlynn

HE SAT AT THE WINDOW, staring into the dark summer night. Behind him his wife moved restlessly, watching him. A soft wind blew at the curtains. He was wearing only a sweat shirt and pajama pants, but he was not cold. The chill was inside him as he waited for the *presence*—how else could he call it?—to make its appearance.

He drew long breaths from a cigarette and he stared into the night that had no sound, no movement. There was only the ticking of the alarm clock on the night table beside him and the creaking of the bed springs under the fitful movements of his wife's body.

His toes had just shifted to a colder position on the radiator when his wife spoke.

"Maybe not tonight, Jim."

"Maybe," he said, but he knew better. There was plenty of time, surely. One night he had waited for two hours before the visitor came.

And there had been seven such nights. Seven nights, while his wife slept, he had watched at this window, and someone had appeared in the glow of the lamp across the street and walked towards him; someone whom he had recognized from an earlier meeting, a nightmare meeting months before, in a town fully thirty miles away.

All week long he had gone through the motions of normal daily

life, while inside he wrestled with the forms of fear. Night had become a vigil time, sleepless, terror-wracked, bringing back with a clearer and clearer sight the terrible long vigils of his early childhood: vigils he thought he had erased forever from his mind along with the fanatic religion which had evoked them. Now, in the midst of this new fear, how slight a reference it required to call forth that towering, fierce-eyed presence of his father: standing over their beds like the incarnation of Doomsday itself, warning them how their sins were eating at their flesh; while they would lie in bed in terror, magnifying every shadow into an agent of Satan and fearing every footfall on the stair as some dark power come to whisk them off. And they used to hear their mother cry out in the dark.

Finally, the weight of memory and actuality was too much to bear, and on this, the eighth evening, when they were at dinner, he had told his wife.

She had been in the process of pouring tea, and it must have been fully ten seconds that she stood unmoving with the tea pot poised over his cup and the steam curling upward from the angled spout. In those few moments he knew that she believed him, and more, was convinced that it was no hallucination but some actual and ominous presence. Even though she laughed

at the idea a little later on and said it was just a coincidence, somebody going home from a late-shift job and his imagination working overtime. She was convinced, and later, as she lay awake and he sat watching, he told her the whole story.

"Peg, you know, I saw him before." He paused without turning his head, but there was no response so he went on.

"A couple months ago, over in Louisburg. It was the night I went to pick you up at the McCulloughs. Remember, I waited for you in the car. You weren't ready when I rang the bell. You were out in the kitchen with Flo, getting a recipe or something. It was a fine night and I told Bill I'd wait in the car. I guess it was only a couple of minutes till I heard someone come out of the building. I thought it was you, he came out of the same apartment building. I even started up the motor. That's when I saw him first. He was standing on the walk, not ten feet away from me, lighting a cigarette. I remember being startled, but I figured it was because it wasn't you. Then he started walking away and I lost interest in him, thinking of other things.

"I don't know how long it was when I suddenly noticed him again. He was standing at the curb at the corner and he was staring right at me through the windshield. And a horrible chill came over me. For though he was fifty feet away I could see every detail of his face, especially his eyes that seemed to bore right inside me, all bloodshot

and protruding and grinning like a devil.

"While we stared at each other, he started walking towards me. Slow, but with the most brazen confidence. As though I knew him. As though he knew I'd have to let him in the car. His crooked face grinning. Then I got panic stricken, I tried to do ten things at once. For a second I thought I was lost. His face came even with the window and his fingers were on the door handle when I finally had presence of mind to push the lock. His face changed—you can't imagine the look. He started for the back door. The car was still idling and I jammed it into first and shot away from the curb. Three blocks away I began to feel foolish. I swung around and went back, but he was gone."

The bed groaned as Peg sat upright. "Jim, you're shaking like a leaf."

"How many times I've seen his face since that night! The unspeakable ugliness of it. The sly confidence . . . as though I had committed some loathsome act, and he knew! Or as though we had done it together. But it was always only in my brain—until last week."

"How can you be sure it's the same person? You saw him close up only that one time."

"I don't know how, but I know. I'd know him anywhere. I'd know him with his back turned. I'd know him in a thousand."

And at that instant, as though to lend weight to his conviction, a figure materialized below them, on

the corner opposite, a figure shadowy and slumped under the foggy street lamp.

"Peg, it's him again. My God, it's him! Do you see?"

She was beside him now. He heard her gasp, felt her fingers clutch his own icy ones.

They watched together as the figure stood motionless for perhaps ten seconds and then stepped into the street and began crossing to their side. His footfalls sounded with a hollow insistence in a night of otherwise perfect silence. The windows of the houses opposite were black, unblinking eyes beneath an oppressive sky. And to Jim Grey the low wind seemed to hold off for as long as that shadow-figure moved.

Suddenly, he did a desperate thing. Thrusting his head through the window opening, he called out, "You, down there—!"

His voice failed him, for the head jerked back and the twisted face glared up at him, breaking on him sickeningly like the unexpected sight of worms on opening a tin of fruit. The blood-soaked eyes with that grin of shared evil floated up at him. Some preternatural power of inflicting harm appeared then to surround the man on the street, and Jim had a sudden terror of the open space between them. He pulled himself inside, slammed the window shut, locked it, and threw himself on the bed in a paroxysm of fright and loathing.

"Jim, Jim!" His wife's voice beat at him like a hammer. He turned his face to her from the pillow.

"That won't be all, Peg. He doesn't let you off this easily! Listen!"

And from three flights down, along the dusty, panelled hallway and up the narrow, dusty staircase, the sound of a door slamming came to them, and the same slow footfall, only muted now.

"In this building! Jim, what can it mean?"

"Listen."

He fell to counting, hypnotically, the steps getting closer, anticipating the different set of sounds as each landing was reached. And then they were very close and his wife stood by the bed with her hand to her mouth, and a mouse scurried in the wall behind him and he finally made a wild, desperate leap, just as in the car that night, and shot the bolt of the lock home.

The steps were on *their* landing now, echoing hollowly like sounds in a nightmare. Did he imagine that they halted outside their door? An interminable second and then they retreated down the hall. Quite distinctly he heard a key being inserted in the door of the next apartment, and then noises on the other side of their bedroom wall. Both he and his wife stood transfixed while seconds lengthened to minutes, until eventually the curtains stirred again at the window and there was the sound of the neighboring bed sinking beneath a heavy weight.

After this sign, Jim looked across the dark of the room at his wife, but he had to step closer to make out her features. She hardly moved



except to face him and in her eyes he saw the struggle of disbelief and fear. He had the uneasy feeling, as she flinched away from the automatic gesture of reassurance, that some of that fear was directed at him.

"If only I could believe it was some elaborate practical joke. Or even the twisted notion of revenge of someone I might have harmed in some way." There *was* fear of him in her eyes; perhaps she thought he was going insane.

He was beginning to seem insane to himself. But he had to keep away the other alternative; the superstition, the belief in spirits and devils, the face of his father, the fanaticism, the footfalls of the demons in his mind. If his father was still alive and could see him now, how complete his triumph would be: the whole hobgoblin world torn open beneath the son's protesting fingers, all the most fantastic forms of that world he had locked away from his thoughts alive in his brain like a Hallowe'en nightmare.

"You did *see* something, Peg!" He suddenly needed that assurance.

"Yes," she said. "But . . . but . . . I can't believe . . . I can't talk about it. Not now, at least." Whether from disbelief or physical exhaustion—he could not be sure—her voice trailed off and she sank in a sobbing heap back on the bed.

Next morning, putting on a light summer coat before the bureau mirror, Jim Gray made a decision. The sun had just risen over the

rooftops opposite, and its light streamed into the bedroom, flecking everything, coverlets, carpet, Peg's clothes strewn on a chair, with a golden haze. It gave him courage.

He would have liked the added courage that resides at the bottom of a cup of coffee, but he did not want to wake Peg. Her night had been quite as sleepless as his own. He looked around at her, sprawled awkwardly, covers kicked aside, sleeping the sleep of exhaustion.

As he stepped into the hall, he had to fight to maintain his resolve. He allowed himself a minute to gain his composure and then he tiptoed to the door of the adjoining apartment. He listened with his cheek barely touching the panelling. Nothing.

He could not knock. That would be to put the thing or person or whatever it was on guard. He could not stand the shock of being discovered first. He had to take the other by surprise.

With infinite care and slowness, his hand gripped the door knob and began to turn it. What if the person inside were watching? Suppose he was listening at the other side of the door! Jim strained to hear, but there was nothing, and he put such thoughts from his mind. The knob turned all the way and he began pushing the door to. As a crack of light appeared, he thrust the door completely open. The color drained from his face.

A ray of sunlight shot past into the hall. It dazzled him, but only briefly. The first thing he noticed was a chest of drawers, with a water



pitcher atop it and a glass half-emptied. Then his gaze caught the bed; it had obviously been slept in, the pillow rumpled, the covers, awry, but the room was deserted. Yet, he felt some ominous presence still. And in a moment his roving glance told him why.

The door to the adjoining bath was open, and on the floor was a long, broad shadow. It was utterly motionless, but he knew it was cast by some palpable presence. He knew then that they were together once more, more intimately than ever before, each waiting, with only that open door between. Time and all the world beyond these two small rooms seemed to hush. Some strange compulsion to close the awful gap took hold of him, and he found himself, half against his will, moving forward. There *was* a secret they shared! This was the thought that struck him, and for a second he reveled in that same evil power that seemed to radiate from the counter-presence beyond the door.

A cloud came before the sun and the wide beam of light retreated from the window, changing the room to a ghostly grey. His former dread welled up inside him and he burst from the room, slammed the door behind him, and ran. Blindly, past his own door, past the fire exit, down the stairs two at a time, through the echoing hall, and onto the street, where at last he felt secure. The sun had appeared again. Three young girls, arm in arm, went past him to the bus stop. Cars flashed by in both directions. A

boy at the corner whistled.

He had forgotten his desk keys, but he would not go back. Resisting the temptation to look up at the window of the room he had just left, he crossed the street and lost himself in the noises of clanging trolleys, screeching taxis, and the chatter of stray acquaintances, work-bound in the morning coolness of a summer day.

The one man had leaned back, and for awhile no word passed between them. They sat across the table from each other in a vast, drafty, high-ceilinged room. The only light, from a small lamp in the center of the table, was pitifully inadequate. A ring of illumination perhaps five feet in diameter revealed the scratched, hard surface of the long table. And it created a strange effect. As each man in turn leaned his face forward in his anxiety to communicate to the other, his face would flare up out of shadow, so that their conversation was like a code passing between the semaphore-lights of ships.

"It's a strange story," the one finally conceded. "I can't pretend to know what it means, or even if it means anything: I don't know why this thing or person appeared to you. I don't know what it was. From what you say it could have been almost anything. Possibly a hallucination, possibly a manifestation of the devil, or possibly just a night-shift worker, as your wife thought."

"She won't think it anymore, Father. Remember, two of us have

seen him now. Don't forget that."

"There is the possibility that both of you were worked up to such a pitch—"

"Father, he's real. I know that with as much certainty as I know you're sitting across from me now. I even have an idea what he's after."

"Yes?" They were both leaning forward now.

"He's evil. It's all around him. You can almost touch it. It's like sores on his flesh."

"Well, my only advice—and, mind, it has nothing to do with my vocation—would be to confront him. Have it out once and for all. You have faith—"

Jim looked quickly away, so that the priest added, meaningfully, as if in proof, "You did come here to-night. And—" with a smile, "you have two powerful-looking fists there."

"But if he—I don't know how to put it, but I think in another moment there this morning I would have lost my soul."

Another long silence passed between them. Somewhere in the night a train whistled.

"How can you know such a thing?" There was even a touch of annoyance now in the voice. "What of your own will power? Are you sure you're not giving in to some fanciful impulse?"

"I don't know what you mean, Father." But he did know the answer was not in this room.

"Do you recall the last time we talked together?" the priest asked.

Jim nodded. "In this very room." His eyes moved from shadow to

shadow as if trying to find some memento of that former time.

"You had a strange notion then, too."

*Strange?* Jim thought to himself. *Strange to want to forget a life that denied life? A religion that was built on terror?* The exact words of his protest came back to him: *How can I believe in a faith—in a God who allows my father to mouth His name even while he commits the most despicable crimes?*

The priest was speaking again; "Don't you see the irony of your position? You couldn't believe in spirits then, in a devil, so you said. And now you imagine you see one."

*Yes, and don't you see the deeper irony, Father Garrity. You who did believe, so you said, who told me so many stories of Satan in the world, of persons selling their souls, of persons possessed—now you are confronted by such a person and you say I imagine.*

The priest was smiling in gentle mockery. "I guess you know the story of Thomas?"

*Who doubted? Yes, Father Thomas Garrity.*

No answer here. It was all too nebulous a thing, too incomplete. He had more than an inkling now, but there were still loose pieces rattling around somewhere.

At the door of the rectory, Father Garrity said something that stirred his thoughts as he walked towards home. Maybe there was something that had happened on that first day when the visitations had become regular. Or perhaps something that would link that day with the night

in Louisburg. He tried to recall every single event, even every thought, every desire. And when the enlightenment came, gradually, he tried to hold it back, for it was even more terrifying than anything that had gone before.

In the car that night he had been thinking of his father, that strange and violent man, and of those terrible, nightmare things he used to tell them. Of how he would come to their bed at night and stand over them and tell them their sins were eating away their souls. "Remember, sin doesn't only bring punishment. It's a corruption. It affects your whole being. You become the evil things that you do. It's a leprosy that destroys by gradually eating away your soul—and your body, too." They would cringe down into the blankets and bury their faces in their pillows while his heavy boots went down the stairs.

Then one day the father had disappeared. It was said he had molested a child on the street. In any event, he had gone away, never to return. Until perhaps . . . and Jim Grey shuddered and thrust away the thought.

He *had* been thinking of his father in the car that night, and of the curious idea of sin as a leprosy. If it was true and his father should come back, what leprous change would his black sins have wrought? And now, he remembered, it must have been almost at that very juncture in his thoughts that he had glimpsed the eyes staring at him, through the windshield. He thought he recognized now those flame-

flecked eyes and the slow, heavy, ominous step.

There was only one thing that still bothered him. One piece that would not fit. Or that he was deliberately holding back, unable to face the dread consequence.

He recalled many other things his father had said about sin. How it could split a man's soul. How, if indulged, it could set itself up as emperor of a man's will. How it could split away, till a man was like a dual personality. How it was even literally possible to come face to face with one's evil self . . . on the streets. . . .

In that instant he knew, even as he had an uncontrollable impulse to glance over his shoulder. It was there, the same figure, following him from a block away. And as he looked, the face broke again into that grin. He gave a piercing, despairing scream and ducked wildly into the alley that would take him to the rear of the apartment building. He saw nothing, heard nothing but his own hysterical cries. With luck, he kept saying to himself, the fire exit door will be unlocked. He dared not think of the opposite alternative. It was unlocked, and as he pulled the metal door shut behind him, he fumbled for the bolt that would shield him from his tormentor. Then the face was there again, through the glass, and he realized with a sickening fear that there was no lock on this door. He turned and stumbled up the stone steps, screaming unintelligibly for his wife to help him.

Finally, gratefully, he was home,

the door locked behind him and his wife facing him as though he were a madman. He caught at his breath in sobs, and soon he began to feel sick in his stomach. His wife made no effort to come to his assistance. She seemed stunned.

He must ask her the question right away, or risk his sanity.

"Who was it?" he demanded. "Who was it you saw last night?"

Her words sounded slow and strange and distant, like drops of molten lead.

"From the first, I had a terrible feeling of knowing the person. But I tried to put it away. I thought we must both have been momentarily out of our minds. And then I remembered a picture you had, of your father. I never saw him, but I couldn't forget that picture. I recall his resembling you so much."

For one instant he dared hope, but despair looked back at him.

"No. Not him. Not your father. You. You, Jim! You! You!"

## *Arise, My Love*

### ● Brother Adelbert

Penelope, my love, wed not, but keep  
Well widowed in your hallowed hollow cell,  
Weaving, weaving webs of wise devising,  
But love them not, my love, Penelope.

Night-shelled within your cell, unravel all  
The patterns of day dreams, the warp and weft,  
Lest loving them you tie the threads and say,  
"Yes, this is well. Yes, this is all."—And wed.

Ulysses-like, I call to you there where  
Your mind, blind Polyphemus, counts his dreams  
In Plato's cave, your tomb and womb of love;  
My love, Penelope, I call to you.

Weep not, Penelope, for I shall come  
To king your palace halls, where now the band  
Of sodden suitor-like desires have spread  
Themselves like cobwebs on your hearth and heart.

From my mouth's bow the arrows of my words  
Will wing and quiver stinging in the flesh  
Of your besiegers; then, the palace cleansed,  
I'll show the scar, and you will know your lord.

Penelope, my love, to Ithaca  
I rush to reach you, running upon the waves  
Where waters of my headlong love fall head-  
Over-heels-in-loveliness to lave your tears.



# The Heart or the Matter

● Brother Felician Patrick, F.S.C.

THREE SHORT QUESTIONS, closely related one to another, form perennial stimuli for fundamental discussions of the nature of art. These questions are: "What is the artist's central problem?" "What is the nature of the art object?" and "Does the perception of an art object differ from the perception of anything else?" Upon the interrelated answers to these questions have been built two dominant theories of aesthetics, the "communication" theory and a theory of modified hylomorphism. Since the communication theory is still dominant in many quarters, it will be discussed first in the light of certain inadequacies and unpleasant consequences connected with it. Thereafter, the second theory will be briefly set forth and compared with the first, with the purpose of testing the ability of both views to answer the three basic questions before us.

The communication theory of art may be said to embody the view that "the central problem of the artist is to communicate the most subjective experiences most effectively to the most percipients." Consistently present among the holders of this view are three elements: communication of something from the artist to the percipient, a subjective experience exerting some kind of causality *even in the percipient* of the completed art object, and the aim of pleasing a fairly large number of beholders. Prefacing a consideration of each of these elements, we might submit the view that these very notions have long been accepted by many without apparent proof, with the result that a warped scale of artistic values has grown up on all sides. The very proportion of time given to various arts and artists in both specialized and "survey" courses at all levels of education shows to what extent non-objective and non-artistic criteria have entered into the criticism of the recent past. Just how the communication theory gives rise to these disorders we shall attempt to show.

A pivotal point of inadequacy in the communication theory lies in the fact that only one of the arts, literature, employs materials which by their nature are designed to communicate at all. The elaborate extension of this purpose into painting, music, and other arts can easily lead to an artificial and subjective superstructure of "interpretation" which ignores the real values of the object. Even with literature itself, the process of communication does not begin to account for many of the factors which have made works immortal, e.g., sound patterns. Few critics, of course, hold that the literary artist sets out to transmit concepts to his readers after the manner of Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life." More general is the view that the artist has set out to objectify some experience which, until his work should be completed, would be forever doomed to remain merely his own,

incommunicable. However, even this subtler position seems at odds with the supreme detachment from their work shown by the greatest artists, and with the clear evidence that many good works have been fashioned from a variety of sources under circumstances tending at least to minimize the role of any subjective experience. Witness in support of these contentions such works as *Hamlet* and *The Canterbury Tales*. Indeed, we might say that throughout their major works neither Shakespeare nor Chaucer could be shown to have communication as his primary aim. Further, the scope of many works precludes the notion of one flash of inspiration which "burned to be communicated." The evidences of successive revision consequent upon public reception—not aesthetic dissatisfaction—suggest some other dominant aim. The very notion that the subjective perception could last long enough to guide the execution of a work of magnitude seems to run counter to normal psychology; yet the unity of vast art works rules out the possibility of a succession of "flashes" to guide the progressive carrying out of the work. While not in the least denying the presence of "a grace beyond the reach of art," in the process of the creation of a masterpiece, it seems necessary to insist that the purpose of communicating a unique and subjective experience could not realistically be considered primary.

The notion of the necessity of some striking experience on the part of the artist, both as the stimulus to create and as the reason, somehow, for the value of the art object itself, enjoys wide tacit acceptance. Yet here too the facts are troublesome. Shakespeare, for instance, wrote many of his plays merely to keep his company supplied. He created history plays from patchquilt sources when such plays were popular, and when they ceased to be popular he ceased to make them. Similarly, the topicality of *The Merchant of Venice* resembles the same quality in Anderson's *Winterset*. The artistry of such works can easily be seen under another literary theory, but not under this one. Beethoven wrote three overtures to *Fidelio* (Leonore I and II, and the Overture to *Fidelio*) because of such factors as consumption of time and difficulty of execution. Keats' work demonstrably improved when he progressed from the Shelleyish stringing together of brilliant impulses to the careful fashioning of integrated patterns.

A still more important consideration in the matter of the subjective experience is the assumption that value is in some way related to uniqueness. Again, the facts seem at variance with this popular view. Some of the greatest works in all languages are rehashings of traditional materials, with examples being too numerous to mention. Let *Lear*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Rape of the Lock*, and for that matter the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, suffice. Surely the highest genius and inspiration were present in the use of the materials; but the materials themselves were neither unique nor subjective. Moreover, there is no evidence to show that the reading of these works gives the reader any clear knowledge of the perceptions and concepts in the minds of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Pope, or Homer. In the

discussion of the consequences of the communication theory, this matter of subjective experience will again come to the fore. There remains in our consideration of the theory itself the item of the percipients of the art work.

"Communication to the most percipients" is an idea that serves well as an antidote to esotericism; but it contains within itself the cult of clarity and eventually of watery mediocrity, a trend all too common among "meaning-hunters" in the field of criticism. It has never been demonstrated that the greatest artists felt obliged to be hampered by the inadequacy of their public. If a composition in any art medium is to "wear well," it is almost *necessary* that it have values which will not only elude the initial perception of it, but permanently elude the perception of all but its most careful and analytical students. It is no valid criticism of an art object that many—even most—fail to understand it immediately or ever. "Snobbery" is an epithet easily hurled; and obscurity is relative.

Taking the theory as a whole, probably the strongest criticism we should submit is that of inadequacy with relation to the problems it seeks to state. When we move into a consideration of its consequences to criticism, our objections must grow more violent. To begin with, the communication theory has led for over a century to critical anarchy, an absolute subjectivism in the evaluation of art works. Since the privacy of the human mind makes it impossible fully to know the "contents" of another's mind, we can never fully determine how successful an artist has been in achieving his alleged prime purpose. Secondly, under this theory, who is to say what is good and what is bad in art (as art), so long as the artist has, to his own satisfaction, objectified his perceptions? We are left entirely without standards by which to judge works or even to educate ourselves to a better appreciation of the objectively worthwhile.

The "communication aesthetic," moreover, has always tended to lead the critic outside the work and into innumerable avenues of research even before he has attained a basic understanding of the work. While not denying the value of literary history, political history, and allied studies for shedding light upon the art object in hand, we might still decry the terminal attention given to these factors as a result of this theory. Chaucer, for example, was studied for centuries in terms of his sources, his possible historical prototypes for characters, his role in defining the structure of the language, his social criticism; but the objective analysis of magnificently *constructed* works was almost entirely overlooked. Much criticism, moreover, has amounted to little more than minute biographical "archaeology." Might not such emphases as these account for the museum-piece status of most great art in the eyes of a preponderant majority of college students today?

Finally, this aesthetic leads frequently to an evaluation of art objects on non-artistic grounds. This insult to the objective scale of created being



often masquerades in the guise of patriotism or piety, the most respectable substitutes for critical acumen. One recent translator, for instance, prefers Langland to Chaucer because she feels the former has a more serious outlook on life. Arnold lauds "high seriousness" as an artistic value; and vast quantities of dreadful religious art are scattered about as pitiable tributes to the decline of a genuinely artistic standard of values. As a century of criticism of art on non-artistic grounds seems at last to be ended, we find it necessary to restore such authors as Pope, Dryden, and even Chaucer to the rank merited by the objective value of their work, rank denied them by the romantics and moralists, who wanted their artists to communicate a sublime impression of one kind or another and cared little for the structures within the art object.

By way of suggesting a counter-theory to the communication aesthetic, we shall attempt a brief outline of the current application of Aristotelian causality to the production and existence of an art object. Clearly, originality will be almost totally absent, since an entire school of critics currently apply such criteria as will follow, at least to the extent that they stress objective analysis rather than subjective impression. It should be admitted at the outset that the analysis of art works as things-that-have-been-fashioned seems relatively weakest at the very point where other approaches may appear stronger, i.e., in the searching attention to the creative process. This process, especially in its "inspired" aspect, persistently eludes confinement within the bounds of rule and measurement (as Pope, eminently regular, was so quick to recognize). Nevertheless, it is the object more than the process which primarily interests the critic. Further, this approach primarily to the object and through the object to the process, seems far more dependable than its opposite as a guide to understanding art and the central problem of the artist.

Taking a traditional and even "classical" view, we submit that art is a process of making, and that an art work is a thing that has been made. The process involves a maker (efficient cause), material out of which a thing is made (material cause), the form achieved (formal cause), and the purpose for which the thing is made (final cause). In the criticism of an art object, we need attend only to the intrinsic causes, material and formal, with nearly all the attention being directed to a full appreciation of the form. But to attempt a statement of the artist's problem, we shall have to proceed to the making process and thus consider all four causes. Let us examine the intrinsic causes first.

Since all art objects are perceptible things, they all have material causes. Thus we can say that music is made from sounds, sculpture from stone, painting from color, and architecture from enclosed space. Literature, in this context, is made from words. For the reason that literature is made from words or language, the communication theory is most frequently



misapplied to it, since words by their nature do communicate. Nevertheless, we shall try to show that insofar as the words are being put to an artistic use, their communicative function is no longer to be regarded as primary. Words as such are merely the material cause of a literary art object.

Like all other matter, all these material causes need determination by a formal cause. In the case of every art, the formal cause may be said to be some pattern or structure wrought by the artist in the material at hand. Music is, then, sounds made into a pattern, architecture is space made into a pattern, and literature is words made into a pattern. Confusion arises only when the conventional perceptual and conceptual meanings attached to words—and to some tones—lead the critic to stress these meanings more than the structures that have been fashioned from them.

In literature, for instance, we see a process whereby material causes become successively determined or "informed," only to serve in turn as material for a further structuralizing or patterning. Sounds are informed by conventional meanings and become words, which are further systematized into language. At this point the communicative function of the words goes on with relatively little further determination; but the work of the artist is just beginning. He goes on to make patterns out of the sounds of the words and to make other patterns out of their meanings. In a highly wrought Shakespearean soliloquy, for instance, objective analysis reveals the presence of intricate patterns of assonance, consonance, alliteration, rime, cadence, meter, and rhythm—all of these fashioned solely from the sounds of the words employed. Moreover, an undreamed-of richness of variation-within-uniformity comes to light when the work is so approached. In the same selection, the meanings of the words will have been worked into contrasts, irony, logical progression in such a way that it is the pattern of meaning, not the meanings themselves, which accounts for the power of the passage. When this technique of analysis is applied to plays in their entirety, virtually a new world of harmonious structures is revealed.

Not the least of the merits of this "causality" approach is that it allows for a full appreciation and criticism of a work in the total absence of a biography of the "efficient cause." Whether or not we have arrived at a full understanding of the "inside" of Shakespeare's mind does not concern us. He made elaborate forms out of this particular matter; and the details of his life pale into comparative insignificance.

With regard to the perception existing in the mind of the artist, that is, the experience that will be objectified, it seems that in a great many cases this ideal to be achieved worked itself out as the object itself took shape. Therefore, in speaking of formal cause, it does not seem necessary to apply this term to anything outside the object (e.g., an "exemplar"), since

in so many instances the form did not integrally pre-exist in the mind of the artist.

The final cause of the art object and the art process may be discussed in two senses. For one thing, the purpose is primarily to delight the human percipient through the appeal of harmony, brilliance, magnitude, etc. to his faculties. Perhaps it may someday be shown that the roots of the pleasure in the beholding of unity-in-variety lie in the very compositeness (unity-in-variety) of human nature itself. At all events, it remains certain that the forms, (structures, patterns) are intended primarily to delight. That this employment of the human faculties is metaphysically good is scarcely ever doubted. A certain guiltiness in the presence of the doctrine of the Cross seems at times to prompt an overspiritualizing or even a denial of this purpose of delight; but these arguments are neither unanswerable nor relevant to the exact topic under discussion.

In another sense, the final cause of an art object may be said to be its own form, especially if we are centering attention on the art *process*. That this interpretation of art for art's sake need not violate teleology goes without saying.

With regard to the efficient cause of the art object, the artist, two assertions might be made. In the criticism of the art object, the artist is among the least important factors to be considered. In the examination of the problems of making forms, he is a prime factor. It is precisely here that the Aristotelian and Thomistic guides to thought become slightly less satisfying, since the direct intellectual knowledge of singular things is practically ruled out by the scholastic analysis of the knowledge process. Yet knowledge of singulars does seem to occur in both the "inspiration" to make a beautiful thing and in the appreciative perception of the beautifully made thing.

Prescinding, then, from a rash attempt to answer the tremendous question on the perception of an art object, we can note that steps toward an answer have been taken by mention of special aspects of form which can cause delight and of the problem of the knowledge of singulars. On the nature of the art object itself, the communication theory must, it appears, bow to the one which stresses analysis. Finally, might not the artist's central problem result from the clash between the "act" of the formal cause of the art-object-to-be with the inertia and balkiness of the indeterminate material cause, a clash which the artist's efficiency must overcome in an unusual, "inspired" manner? Is not this clash precisely what goes on in a less arduous way when anything—be it only a chair—must be *made*? The whole problem seems to be rooted not so much in the inherent difficulty of communication, as in the fundamental and inherent cleavage which works within all visible creatures, unities yet composite, existing beings yet so inert, combining vivifying form with lifeless matter.

# The Torch That Aristotle Dropped

• Joe Coogan

MICKEY LEARY'S ENTRANCE to Mullin's Tap was accompanied by a loud clap of thunder and a brilliant flash of lightning. Brophy, the Prophet, who was sitting at the front of the bar, pointed a bony finger at the little man.

"It's coming," he said; he consulted a large pocket watch. "In fact, it's a few minutes late." Brophy was referring to the end of the world.

"Well, if I hurry," Leary said, "I might have time for a drink."

Mickey Leary was a rotund, amiable man in his early fifties. He carried himself with a certain nonchalant majesty, which had its foundation in a firm belief in the ultimate perfection of his own being.

He sauntered to the bar and sat near a tall blond young man. The young man stared at Leary, shook his head sadly, and looked in the opposite direction.

Dan Mullin, the owner, poured a beer and put it in front of the little man.

"Mickey," he said, "I'm glad to see you. This place is driving me nuts."

Leary brought his right hand close to his chest and flicked his thumb toward the blond man.

"An odd duck," Mullin whispered. "Been here an hour and

hasn't said yes, no, or go to the devil."

The thunder rumbled threateningly outside. Brophy, the Prophet, raised his right hand high in the air.

"Signs and portents," he said.

"Brophy, will you shut up!" Mullin yelled.

"What are you worrying about, Dan?" Leary said. "He's been making the same prediction every Saturday afternoon for the last year."

"I know," said Mullin, "but today it sounds logical."

It was dark in the taproom. The only illumination came from the barrel-shaped juke box near the entrance, which sent green and purple disks of light sliding across the mahogany bar.

Brophy, the Prophet, stood up. His lean, hollow face kept changing color as it reflected the light from the juke box. Just as he turned purple, a happy thought seemed to occur to him and he smiled cheerfully.

"Death and destruction," he said.

Mullin almost dropped a glass.

The blond man chuckled. "There's really no cause to be alarmed," he said, "the poor fellow merely displays an unfortunate but interesting psychological phenomenon."



"Yes," said Leary. "He's plastered."

"It's not too late," Brophy said. "Return! Return to the faith of your fathers!"

"In his own ignorant way," the blond man said, "he's echoing the thoughts of modern spiritual leaders in their plea for a strengthened Christianity."

"Brophy is a devout Druid," Mullin said.

"Beware the Goddess Wyrd," said Brophy, "her hour is fast arriving."

"For the love of Heaven, Brophy," Mullin said, "why don't you run out and go dancing in some damned sacred grove?"

But the Prophet, his message delivered, rested his head on the bar and closed his eyes.

The blond man walked to the juke box and glared at the list of selections. "Trash!" he said. He walked back to the bar.

"Are you a music lover?" Leary asked.

"I'm a scientist," the blond man said, "but I devote as much time as possible to the Arts." He gave the impression that the Arts should feel grateful.

"I'm quite a musician myself," Leary said, "I could have been a great composer if I wanted to. I'll never forget the time I was offered the privilege of conducting a thousand piece orchestra, playing one of my own tunes."

"Was the performance a success?" The blond man's voice held a trace of doubt.

"I refused the opportunity," said

Leary. "I can't stand crowds."

The young man shook his head sadly and turned away.

Leary tapped him on the shoulder. "Did I understand you to say you were interested in science?"

"I'm not only interested," the young man said, "I've devoted my life to it." His words had a clipped, final quality, as if he were reading them from a scroll. "I sometimes like to think that we scientists are the bearers of the Torch of Learning, first lighted by Aristotle and almost extinguished after his death."

"It's too bad he died," Leary said. "But then we all have to go some day."

"I studied at Yale for six years. I was a pure scientist."

"You naturally would be," said Leary, "in such a refined atmosphere."

The Yale man lurched toward Leary, and put his mouth close to the little man's ear. "I'm an expert on atomic energy," he shouted.

"I don't usually mention it," Leary said, "but I'm something of an expert on the atom myself."

"Really," the Yale man said.

"Yes," said Leary, "I almost split the atom twenty years ago. I would have, too—if I hadn't been careful. Me and a fellow named Rattigan, a good scientist though no great shakes for purity, were drinking one afternoon and—"

"My friend," the blond man interrupted, "you're a stretty pupid—or—pretty stupid man." The scroll was becoming blurred.

"So you doubt my word!" Leary shouted.



"Certainly not," said the blonde man. He didn't sound sincere.

"Take it easy, Mickey," Mullin said, "you just misunderstood the man."

"Just a misunderstanding," agreed the blonde man, "I'm very interested in your experience." He sneered. "In your experiments you used Einstein's formula  $E=mc^2$ ?"

"No," said Leary, "I did not."

"Don't think much of Einstein—eh, Mickey?" Brogan said.

"A greatly overrated man."

"But you must admit," the blond man said, "that his theory of relativity has a great deal of merit."

"I admit nothing," Leary said.

"What do you think," the blond man said scornfully, "of his theory concerning the dualistic nature of radiant energy?"

"Balderdash!" said Leary. "They kick up a lot of fuss over a very simple thing. If I had wanted to I could have split an atom twenty years ago and if I put my mind to it I could do the same thing today."

The blond man smiled. "Do it," he said.

"Now, just a minute, Mickey," Mullin said, "we'll have none of your monkeyshines at this bar."

"All right, Dan," said Leary, "you talked me out of it."

"Anyone that won't back up his word," the blond man said, "is completely devoid of honesty and integrity."

"It's a complicated job," Leary said, "and an expensive proposition."

The blond man took a ten dollar bill from his pocket and put it on

the bar. "Will this cover it?" he asked.

"It's no use," said Leary, "I respect the proprietor's wishes."

Mullin scowled. "I'd hate to think, Leary," he said, "that any crumb that came into this establishment was completely devoid of honesty and integrity. I'd throw him out on the street."

Leary's face reddened. The narrow barroom seemed to be closing in on him, and the distant thunder sounded like deep, mocking laughter. He stared dully at the rows of bottles and glasses behind the bar. Then, slowly, a warm buoyant feeling of assurance began to rise up in him. He ran his eyes confidently over the glistening bottles. After all, Aristotle had probably started with less.

"Remember," he said, "you asked for it."

He walked quickly behind the bar, grabbed an almost empty ginger ale bottle, pulled out the large metal "Stay Fresh" cork and poured the contents into a mixing glass. He added a dash of beer, a jigger of rye whiskey, three cigarette butts, a maraschino cherry and two olives. He filled it to the brim with seltzer water and stirred slowly with a Jewish pickle. He funnelled the mixture back into the bottle, jammed in the cork, and placed the bottle carefully on the bar. Nothing happened. He walked slowly back to his place and sat dejectedly on the bar stool. Suddenly his face brightened.

"I almost forgot," he said, "I need about fifty pounds of uranium."

Mullin and the blond man laughed. Leary picked the bottle off the bar and swung it wildly around his head.

"Damn it!" he said, "How can a man do the job if you don't give him the proper tools?"

The blond man backed toward the door. Mullin took a large wooden mallet from underneath the bar.

"Leary," he said, "I'll give you just two seconds to get out of here."

The little man stiffened. He threw the bottle on the bar and turned away.

A sound like a pistol shot echoed in the barroom. The metal cork flew from the bottle and crashed into the juke box. Bright tongues of purple flame flared from the machine and then subsided. Thunder exploded against the walls of the building and a thick cloud of smoke ascended from the juke box. It was

shaped something like a mushroom.

Brophy, the Prophet, leaped to his feet. "I'm coming, Wyrd!" he shouted. He plunged through the smoke, collided against the Yale man and ricocheted out the door.

Rain slanted in through the open doorway and the smoke gradually cleared away.

The blond young man sat on the floor. He shook his head slowly from side to side. "Incredible!" he kept saying, "Incredible!"

Mullin's voice came from the floor behind the bar. "Leary, if you ever split another atom in here—out you go!"

Mickey Leary stood at attention about ten feet from the blond man. There was a large smudge on his right cheek and the smoke had made his eyes water, but his face wore an expression of reverent dedication. It could easily be seen in whose hands the Torch of Aristotle rested.

## ***Futile Effort***

● John Keenan

I have tried to rake leaves on a windy day,  
Attempting to guide them to captive stacks  
Where I could deal with them the neatest way;  
But they're elusive with the wind at their backs.  
So there I stand with persecuted face  
And empty basket, knowing for a fact  
The wind will win and the leaves will play, and  
So once again chaos will have its say.

## **The Theater in Philadelphia**

# **It Always Plays at the Shubert**

● Dan Rodden

THE LITTLE MAN in the brown suit followed the large woman into the aisle seats directly in front of mine at the Shubert Theater, tugging off his topcoat as he came. He was speaking, but she was paying little attention to what he said.

"You heard him," he said. "They don't refund tickets this late. That's their policy, they don't refund tickets this late."

They settled into their seats. The little man made a tentative move to help the woman remove her coat (I think it was beaver), but she twitched her shoulders out of it without his assistance. She continued to twitch her left shoulder, the one nearest him, in a gesture of exasperation. Finally, she spoke. Her deep voice was an ironic imitation of his lighter one. "It *always* plays at the Shubert," she said.

"Well, it does," he said. "Every time we've seen it, it's been here. I was in a hurry, today at noon. I didn't notice. I just asked the man for two for this evening."

"Every time you've seen it, you mean. I've seen it at least *twice* at the Forrest. Matinees, with Helen. You weren't even there. The one time they had the little girl from Scranton—what was her name?—she was Kathie. And the other time they had the real beer in the steins, the paper said. But of course you know it all, Mister Doesn't-even-look-at-the-signs-to-see-what's-playing. It *always* plays at the Shubert."

They were silent for several minutes. A string ensemble filed into place, tuned up briefly with the piano, and began a medley of imitation English country airs. They were about sixteen bars into it when her elbow demanded his attention (he was absorbed in his program) and she shot him a glance. Her eyebrows were narrowed, and she vocalized a wordless, contemptuous sound. It was clear that she was comparing the string ensemble unfavorably with the probable twenty-piece pit band over at the Forrest, and the neo-Grainger-cum-Handel medley disastrously with the Romberg overture. "I've read about this fellow Fry," he said. "They gave him a real good write-up in *TIME*." She didn't reply, and this was his last effort at conciliation. Soon the curtain went up, and the play began.

Almost immediately, its rhetorical complications developed. At each involved metaphor, the large woman would turn her head swiftly and stare, purse-lipped, at the side of the little man's face. He concentrated his attention upon the stage; when the audience was moved to laughter by some metered aphorism or other, his laugh would ring loud and high above



all the rest, although apt to be a bit late in coming. As the act went on, he sank deeper into his seat. Upon its conclusion the woman turned to him, apparently ready to make some crushing comment—or perhaps she intended to continue her wordless attack upon him, upon Christopher Fry, and upon everything that they both stood for. But the little man was asleep. Infuriated, she dug her elbow into his ribs. He awakened immediately.

"Interesting, didn't you think?" he said. "Let's get a smoke." Without looking at her, he pivoted and strode manfully up the aisle.

"Here," she called after him. "Take your coat." She carried it with her as she followed him.

They didn't return after the intermission. I think it is extremely unlikely that they saw what was left of *The Student Prince*, that evening. I think it far more probable that the large woman attended the following Wednesday's matinee. At the Forrest. With Helen.

*VENUS OBSERVED. A Play by Christopher Fry, at the Shubert Theater.*

Once again, Fry has demonstrated his remarkable poetic talents. This I firmly believe, despite the large woman at the Shubert and even weightier opinion to the contrary. *Venus Observed* is not, take it all-in-all, as good a play as *The Lady's Not For Burning*. It is not, in the words of my unkeen observation of last issue, "somewhat better constructed." What I mistook, in the reading, for better construction, was the fact that Fry has on this occasion written several more theatrical scenes than had been his wont; in *The Lady*, he habitually had his characters discussing something interesting that had happened off-stage—here he has them play it out, which I think is distinctly better. But what I should have seen, even in the reading, was that the constructive unity of the earlier play was in the constantly interesting character of Thomas Mendip, he of the fascinating, ironic death-wish. The Duke of Altair, principal character in *Venus Observed*, is not nearly so compelling a character as Thomas; Thomas changed, which is the essence of dramatic action—the Duke can only get tired.

For all that, the play is extremely interesting and occasionally—when the direction and the playing lets it be—delightful. Rex Harrison, as the autumnal Duke who would choose, out of a garden of dalliances, a flower for the button-hole of his declining years (see what this Fry does to you?), is splendid; his approach is much better suited to the cadences of the Fry verse than was that of John Gielgud as Thomas Mendip. Of Gielgud's widely-praised performance, I thought it lacked only two more musketeers to complete the set.

About the other performances, I would be a bit more qualified. Lilli

Palmer, while as charming a lass as ever rejected the overtures of an autumnal Duke and went off a-Maying with his son, is a bit tentative as the principal lady involved; I think it is less her fault than Fry's. Of the others, John Williams, as the Duke's under-handed over-seer, comes off best; the rest have been directed (by Sir Laurence Olivier, he of Crispin's Day!) into a kind of lethargy which is only at times indicated in the script. There have been complaints from certain quarters that the actors frequently trip over Fry's symbolism; I can only suggest that this is at least more active than anything Sir Laurence gave them to do. Only once, in the fire scene at the end of Act Two, do they stir their stumps—and here so loudly and violently that the whole point of the scene, and a very funny point it is, is quite obscured.

One other thing: Fry seems to me happier in writing of other lands, of other times; so, of course, was Shakespeare. So might be any poet—*The Cocktail Party* certainly hasn't made the opposite point to my satisfaction. In the present-day living room (or even, as here, "The Observatory Room at Stellmore Park, the Duke's mansion") there are simply too many chairs and things for the characters to sit down on. True, for part of the second act and all of the third, Fry transports his people to, of all places, "The Temple of the Ancient Virtues, Stellmore Park." But they have gotten to like sitting by this time, and they continue to sit. Unfortunately, whenever Fry's characters sit down, so do his words. And the words, in any play of Fry's sort (are there any other plays of his sort, of recent writing? Giraudoux was, I guess, a sort of French Fry), must never sit down. They may dance on their toes, they may fight duels with each other, they may tumble and juggle and climb balconies and vault high walls and swing out over the audience on arcing trapezes. But they must never sit down.

*THE SHRIKE. A Play by Joseph Kramm, at the Walnut Street Theater.*

In point of effectiveness (and what other point is there?) *The Shrike* is just about the best psychological melodrama I have ever seen. That the play is hardly a definitive sociological document upon institutional treatment of the mentally ill, that some of its legal technicalities would hardly bear inspection in the most cursory of courts, and that even its own audiences may be inspired to doubt fifteen minutes after the final curtain—these undoubted facts do not have real bearing. Beautifully under-written, brilliantly under-played in production, *The Shrike* moves audiences closer to the edge of their seats than any similar new play of recent years—which, I take it, is the special purpose of melodrama—and evokes an accumulating empathic terror which is positively shattering.

Jose Ferrer, much admired as Lord Fancourt Babberly, as Iago, as Cyrano, as Oliver Entwhistle, as the Dauphin (to give an indication of his

incredible versatility), gives his finest performance as the tortured, captive victim of a predatory wife. His direction and production are of a piece. *The Shrike* is no great shakes as literature. But it is certainly wonderful theater.

It rather amused me (I am a simple man and have been known to be amused for hours by the spectacle of a cat chasing its tail) that the same Philadelphia reviewers who professed to an entire understanding of the Fry play, revealed complete bafflement at Kramm's denouement. One, roughly employing Matthew Arnold's critical method, decided that the playwright had in mind some such tricky ending device as J. Frank Stockton employed in his *fin de siècle* short story, *The Lady or the Tiger?*, and made comparisons on this basis. Surely Doctor Tom's son intended a worthier "touchstone" than such as this? Anyway, Kramm's ending was pretty clear to me; but—again—I am a simple man.

YOU WON'T MIND if I give you a composite picture of other recent developments? I don't like to dwell upon most of them, and I didn't think you would. First off, among other dubious predictions I ventured to make last issue, I believe I said that *Seventeen*, soon to come in, was "reportedly a pleasant if non-historic musical." Since this is the only one of my prophecies which does me credit, I hasten to add that *Seventeen* was a most pleasant show, characterized by high spirits, a good performance, an adequate score, and—unfortunately for its chances of a tour (it opened and closed here after a six-months losing stay on Broadway)—an absolute Lack of Significance. I suppose that, in an age where some pomposity like *Paint Your Wagon* is critically praised, despite its inherent boresomeness, because it embodies a phony-folk-epic, wagons-westward, Americana-type theme, where a rousing good show like *South Pacific* is mostly commended because it deals, melodramatically and occasionally and not very universally, with the problem of race tolerance, it would be too much too expect any such commendation for *Seventeen*.

The three other plays I saw were comedies, it said on the program. Two of them were by established writers, and the other was by a new kid. *Jane*, S. N. Behrman's stretched-out version of a Maugham short story, was easily the best. Certain critics have indicated their opinion that Behrman's creative powers have greatly declined since the early Thirties. I didn't think this was so, and I went back and read *End of Summer* and *Brief Moment* and *Wine of Choice* and a couple of others, Behrman's hits of his hey-day. Plot-wise, they aren't as good as *Jane* (which has at least three plots that I counted, the most important being the Cinderella and Little Miss Fix-it ones), and Mr. Behrman is just as capable of turning a phrase today as he ever was.



The decline of George S. Kaufman—as a writer (his other powers are not only unimpaired but enhanced)—is not fit subject for levity here. Mr. Kaufman's newest bad play, *Fancy Meeting You Again*, written with his wife, Leueen MacGrath, makes (or rather, made: he was realist enough to close it forthwith) the mistake of assuming that the idea of reincarnation, the transmigration of souls, is automatically funny. It is not. I wouldn't for the world suggest any upheaval in Mr. Kaufman's domestic life. But I did like him better when he was married to Mr. Hart.

*Dear Barbarians*, a comedy by one Lexford Richards, was acclaimed by the local Archers as a fine, promising thing. I was most interested in a group of blue-coated musicians who inhabited the Stage Left box and played atonal entr'acte music. It didn't have any connection with the play; it turned out that Mr. Richards had himself written the music and had decided that, now that he had us there, we were going to witness everything he could do. I checked in the lobby going out, but there wasn't any exhibition of water colors. I guess Mr. Richards doesn't paint.

Oh, yes. *The Merry Widow* was here. It featured, as Danilo, one Marcel LeBon, whom the Shuberts introduced gravely as a *jeune chanteur francais*. It closed, after the first week. And Cornelia Otis Skinner was here, too. And, as I have implied, *The Student Prince* was here, in its Positively-Farewell-Engagement. Twice, within the month. Also, *A Month of Sundays* and *Curtain Going Up*. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*.

## ***Remember, Man***

● Joseph McLean

In hop-scotch time we met the morning sun,  
Like tiny specks of dust in a beam of light;  
And in our brilliance nothing seemed so right,  
Till evening came and ended our brief run.

We are at rest now, mingled with the dust  
That lies on floors, no more to play again;  
Unless—unless some uncalled breath shall flame,  
And we are kissed by its sweet light. It must . . .

It must.

# A Sketch and a Poem

## Old Mommie Witch

UP IN THE BACK ROOM the voices from the yard were whispers and rustlings, and in the bed whose four posters boxed her room the woman heard them. They murmured across the pain threatening the womb like leaves tapping the window-edge of storm. She shifted toward the dry, reminiscent voice at her side—her husband's voice thinned to a reed—and listened to his mother:

"When I was carrying Len . . . when I . . ."

The leaves, tapping, scraped; and the younger woman drew down the corners of her mouth in pain. Up and down a subdued octave the outward voices drifted and blended at last to a monody that swelled and hovered in the distillate light of that evening:

"Old mommie witch . . . old mommie witch . . ."

The incantation wakened a memory older than the room and thinner than the lingering light.

"Isn't it time for the children to come in?" she asked fearfully. "Why doesn't Len get them in?"

"Lie still, dear . . . don't fret," the grandmother touched her forehead, "he's calling the cab now."

Down the yard the chanting fell, and a tapping detached itself from that rhythm and pattered, an extension of the receding song and light, down the yard.

"There goes one of them . . . that's Kennet . . . oh, tell Len or he'll get out . . ."

Within the womb the child lurched. In her eyes the bedposts shuddered, and the barbaric jangling of the telephone dislocated the room—its plaid hangings and subdued lights—further from reality. The plaintive shuttle of the voices of her children swelled, and the little steps were lost. Angry love and a fierce and primitive fear, the chorus and the sentinel light; and from this, though it cost a life, no child must be lost.

She cried.

"Look for him; look for him!"

The grandmother left, and she was alone with the detached, swaying, haunting trill in the shadow beyond; and with the unknown weight of incipient years within.

"Old mommie witch, fell in a ditch, picked up a penny and thought she was rich . . ."

### II

At the base of the box hedge by the gate he could pry himself through. For a moment he was caught, and he lay with his face in the pungent damp earthsmell, listening to the voices and tapping his foot against the root of the hedge to the swell and fall of the chant. He hummed in a tuneless monotone to the drifts and pauses of the song in the yard. *Da-da-dada . . .*

# By Claude F. Koch

*Kennet, Kennet*, over his shoulder, hidden, as he pulled through the hedge, the voice of the old lady who held and rocked him warm cut the chant, and he smiled and nodded his tuneless song. The alley stretched fifty yards to a gaslight beyond which the sullen traffic distantly jarred. But here birds flew off at the height of his head from hedges warped by old wind, and he pointed awkwardly and curiously toward their flight. A peach, larger than his hand, hung from a limb that brushed his head and he pulled at it. Spreading his legs he rocked past the peach tree toward the gas light far in the future—*da-da-dada . . . da-da-dada . . .*

The light dissipated and the lamp grew larger, while from all the secret and ancient crevices, and out of the indentations that his light step pressed into the earth, rose the bruised and pungent lingering harbingers of future memory. Mint and clover and clematis closed him in securely. A tuneless insect joined his song, and he rocked to a pause and listened to it, his head tilted to catch the dull note, his hand outstretched to gather in the form whirling past. Behind him the latch of the gate clicked open and he heard the voice, sharper and demanding as he pressed against the scratching hedge, "*Kennet, Kennet!*"

And then, questioning, "*Kennet?*"

He backed his bottom against the hedge, playing with his smile and comprehending eyes toward the

sound of the voice and the other voices humming beyond, and the mother waiting in the room of plaids and white sheets and scents higher still beyond. He was a conspirator in their ancient game.

Then the gate closed again, and the alley opened infinitely toward all the fragrant prisons of the earth, outward beyond the gaslamp, and up with the sorcerer birds through the peach boughs. The steps of his grandmother faded up the alley. Calling, "*Kennet? Kennet?*"

He sat placidly in the thick, bitter grass under the hedge and dug with a hesitant thumb in the sandy surface of the alley, carrying the abrasive crumbs to his mouth. Over his shoulder the house was a presence that whispered and warmed and stayed with him—even as he lurched with a wry face to his hands and knees, and up on his feet again. He followed a moth toward the gas lamp.

### III

The husband was mounting the stairs.

"Dorie!" he called, "get ready, cab's downstairs. Dorie!"

His voice was unnaturally loud, and in the suspended silence as it drifted away she could hear only his hurried step and a distant "*Kennet?*". The other voices that were tied to other nights and all to this, were stilled in the yard. She struggled to a sitting position on the side of the bed.

He entered and stooped for the



suitcase, and when he looked up it was to peer anxiously at the tears in her eyes.

"Dorie. What?"

"Where are the children, where are they?"

"Why, in the yard; don't worry about them."

"The baby's out . . . I'm afraid for them . . . it's dark . . ."

She sat awkwardly, trying to penetrate the darkened glass across the room. What was falling away; what hold on the weave of the present loosening and she leaving them—dispersed like the voices into the waiting evening? She felt discarded, carrying alone a resentful life. These strangers: she looked at her husband, withdrawn from her; and out the window again.

"Oh, Kennet's gone." She arose, an ungainly figure, catching at the slim and swaying post of the bed.

The hall directed her away from them. Her husband was a shadow

at her side. The house seemed to anticipate her descending steps; a hinge scratched and the rear door clapped to. They were in the foyer and the door was open to the expectant night.

"They were singing; why did they stop," she said.

They got into the cab.

The cab was drawn away across the gravel drive; its taillight lost down the demanding street. Then, quietly and mounting ritualistically, isolating the house from the understandable darkness around it, from the yard the children's voices grew again:

"Old mommie witch . . . old mommie witch . . ."

And in the hedge by the steps, a thin, monotonous little voice repeated, "da-da-dada . . . da-da-dada . . ."

And closer came the steps, "Kennet? Kennet?"

The moth tapped the lighted door.

## ***Song of the Mad Tinker***

Woodlands that slumber  
In this sly season,  
Ungathered lumber  
Left beyond reason,  
Untapped sweet maple,  
Uncut soft popple,  
Mellowing barnbeam,  
Rotting fence staple,  
Mildewing apple,  
Unpainted steeple;  
Hung from the crosstrees  
Web of the spider:  
Where is the life that  
Sparkled like cider?

God! Has the lean rat  
Burrowed the larder?  
Have all the people  
Under their warder  
Passed like the summer  
Into this charnel  
Season, sans house?  
*Cursed be the dark land*  
*By bell, book, and candle!*  
O, I am lonely—  
Spell me the reason  
Is it the season  
And me wandering only?

## Contributors

**M**ICHAEL L. SIKORSKI, "layman" in "Ecclesiastical Art and the Layman," is a senior English major at La Salle, as are JOHN J. KEENAN and JOSEPH G. McLEAN, both of whom have contributed verse to this issue. Of Sikorski and Keenan, it might be noted that both express the desire to teach and write, not necessarily in that order. McLean, a Navy veteran, plans a career in the newspaper profession; he is at present employed at the Philadelphia United Press office. JOSEPH MINTZER, "ecclesiastical artist," has contributed the typographic cover design for **FOUR QUARTERS**.

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